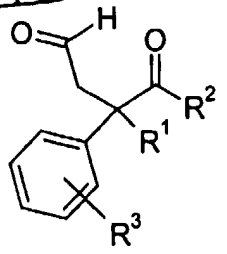
WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A process for the preparation of a compound of the formula II:



formula II

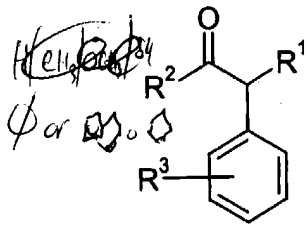
wherein

R^1 is hydrogen, $(C_1\text{-}C_6)$alkyl, $(C_1\text{-}C_6)$alkoxy, $(C_1\text{-}C_6)$alkylthio;

R^2 is phenyl, naphthyl or $(C_3\text{-}C_{12})$cycloalkyl substituted with one or two substituents selected from the group consisting of hydrogen, $(C_1\text{-}C_6)$alkyl, $(C_1\text{-}C_6)$alkoxy, $(C_1\text{-}C_6)$alkylthio, $(C_2\text{-}C_6)$alkenyl, $(C_2\text{-}C_6)$alkynyl, $(C_1\text{-}C_6)$alkylhalo, $(C_3\text{-}C_8)$cycloalkyl, $(C_3\text{-}C_8)$cycloalkenyl or halo;

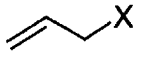
R^3 is selected from the group consisting of hydrogen, $(C_1\text{-}C_6)$alkyl, $(C_1\text{-}C_6)$alkoxy, $(C_1\text{-}C_6)$alkylthio, $(C_2\text{-}C_6)$alkenyl, $(C_2\text{-}C_6)$alkynyl, $(C_1\text{-}C_6)$alkylhalo, $(C_3\text{-}C_8)$cycloalkyl, $(C_3\text{-}C_8)$cycloalkenyl or halo, comprising,

treating a compound of formula III



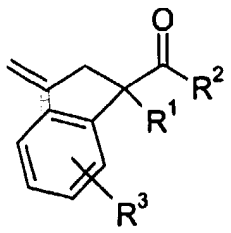
formula III

wherein R^1, R^2 and R^3 are described as above, with a suitable base and a compound of formula IV:



formula IV

wherein X is a suitable leaving group, to provide the compound of formula V



formula V

and oxidizing the compound of formula V with a suitable oxidizing agent to provide the compound of formula II.

2. A process according to claim 1 wherein

R^1 is CH_3;

R^2 is cyclohexyl; and

R^3 is hydrogen.

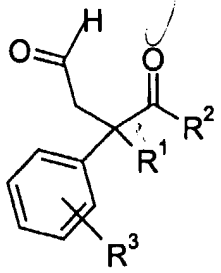
3. A process according to claim 2 wherein

X is Br or Cl.

4. A process according to claim 3 wherein the suitable oxidizing agent is ozone.

5. A process according to claim 4 wherein the suitable base is potassium tert-butoxide.

6. A compound of the formula:



wherein

R^1 is hydrogen, $(C_1\text{-}C_6)$alkyl, $(C_1\text{-}C_6)$alkoxy, $(C_1\text{-}C_6)$alkylthio;

R^2 is phenyl, naphthyl or $(C_3\text{-}C_{12})$cycloalkyl substituted with one or two substituents selected from the group consisting of hydrogen $(C_1\text{-}C_6)$alkyl, $(C_1\text{-}C_6)$alkoxy, $(C_1$-

C_6)alkylthio, (C_2-C_6)alkenyl, (C_2-C_6)alkynyl, (C_1-C_6)alkylhalo, (C_3-C_8)cycloalkyl, (C_3-C_8)cycloalkenyl or halo;

R^3 is selected from the group consisting of hydrogen, (C_1-C_6)alkyl, (C_1-C_6)alkoxy, (C_1-C_6)alkylthio, (C_2-C_6)alkenyl, (C_2-C_6)alkynyl, (C_1-C_6)alkylhalo, (C_3-C_8)cycloalkyl, (C_3-C_8)cycloalkenyl or halo.

7. A compound according to claim 6 wherein

R^1 is CH_3;

R^2 is cyclohexyl; and

R^3 is hydrogen.